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SIPDIS

DEPT PLEASE PASS TO OES/EP, SA/INS, SA/RA, USAID FOR
BERNADETTE BUNDY - ANE/SA; TREASURY FOR KATIE BERG AND ROY
ADKINS; USTR FOR AUSTR WILLS; COMMERCE FOR ARIADNE BENAÏSSA

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: DECL: N/A

TAGS: [SENV](#) [ETRD](#) [EFIN](#) [EAID](#) [PREL](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S COURTESY CALL ON ENVIRONMENT MINISTER
RUKMAN SENANAYAKE

1. (U) This telegram is sensitive but unclassified, please handle accordingly.

2. (SBU) Summary: During his initial courtesy call with Environment and Natural Resources Minister Senanayake on November 18, the Ambassador discussed the Tropical Forest Conservation Act initiative and potential environmental issues related to US Trade Promotion Authority. Senanayake was enthusiastic about TFCA and indicated the GSL is preparing enabling legislation. He admitted to problems with certain NGOs, but was optimistic about getting eventual agreement. Senanayake used the discussion on trade-related environmental issues to express GSL appreciation for USAID efforts to implement air quality improvement measures, particularly emission standards and testing. End Summary

TFCA

3. (U) Ambassador paid an initial courtesy call on Minister for Environment and Natural Resources Rukman Senanayake on November 18. The Ambassador noted his recent conversations in Washington on the Tropical Forest Conservation Act (TFCA) initiative. The US is ready to move forward with this initiative.

4. (SBU) Senanayake was enthusiastic about TFCA but frustrated with the criticisms being voiced by certain segments of the NGO community. He complained that certain Sri Lankan NGOs lacked technical capacity and were primarily politically motivated. Ambassador suggested that he and Senanayake jointly host a meeting with NGO reps and other stakeholders to respond to concerns. Senanayake agreed and noted that upcoming public discussions on the enabling legislation would provide a good backdrop for such a meeting. (Note: The legislation is currently with the GSL's legal draftsmen. Once completed, it will come to the Ministry and the Minister will host a public meeting to answer questions and get input. After that, the bill would be submitted to the cabinet committee, followed by a consultative committee of parliament, before being submitted to parliament for final consideration. End Note.)

Potential FTA Negotiations

5. (SBU) The Ambassador then noted that the Environment Ministry would likely play a key role in any potential negotiation of an FTA and explained the environmental portions of US Trade Promotion Authority. Senanayake acknowledged the importance of a potential FTA and said his ministry was working to improve enforcement of environmental standards. Senanayake said that Sri Lankans were environmentally conscious. While some countries might find value in lowering environmental standards for industrial gain, such a move would not be acceptable in Sri Lanka.

6. (SBU) In this vein, Senanayake noted USAID assistance in the area of air quality improvement, particularly with regard to vehicle emissions and testing. USAID-sponsored experts and projects have played a significant role on reducing emissions and have been instrumental in framing appropriate policy responses to the problem. He indicated the ministry's goal was to improve enforcement, but to operate initially through a cooperative process aimed at ensuring widespread public exposure to new environmental rules.

LUNSTEAD